Members of Congress and their staff spend a great deal of time in the districts they represent. City visits are the single best way to help federal legislators and their staff understand the connections between D.C. policy issues and what’s happening in their district. Site visits don’t have to be an arduous undertaking, especially with NLC’s Federal Advocacy team ready to help! In fact, there are just five steps to putting together a successful event.

Event Planning Steps

1. **PRE-PLAN**
   Email NLC at advocacy@nlc.org to let the Federal Advocacy team know that you are willing to conduct a city visit. NLC staff members are eager to help in any way—from brainstorming ideas, to drafting materials, to helping you work with congressional offices.

2. **DEVELOP A PLAN**
   What would you like to show the member of Congress and/or staff person? Who should attend the visit? What issues are important to your local government’s ability to provide services to your community?

3. **ISSUE THE INVITATION**
   Provide the details of your proposed visit in a short letter of invitation, which you can fax or e-mail to the district office. Follow up with a phone call and get the planning process underway.

4. **CONDUCT THE VISIT**
   Once everything’s arranged, conducting the visit is almost the easiest part. You’ll need to remain somewhat flexible, however, in case of unforeseen scheduling conflicts or other problems.

5. **FOLLOW UP**
   Let the Federal Advocacy team know how the visit went and whether the member of Congress and/or staff person raised any questions that need a response. We can also assist with additional follow-up ideas to help you build a lasting relationship with the member of Congress’ office.
This Site Visit Toolkit includes all the materials you’ll need for an effective visit. Your participation in site visits could make all the difference in our achievement of policy goals that help cities thrive. Please consider putting together a brief visit—and let NLC help!

Site Visit Setup Checklist & Tips

**STEP 1: PRE-PLAN**

- Check with NLC’s staff to let them know of your willingness to conduct a visit – and get their support!

**STEP 2: PLAN THE VISIT**

- Decide who to invite to the site visit. Include elected officials and relevant staff, as well as members of your community.
- Decide what to show your guests. Choose locations that relate to policy issues or highlight projects underway.
- Consider inviting the media – but only in coordination with the congressional office.
- Put the plan in writing. See sample agendas.
- Schedule a meeting/phone call with your internal personnel involved with the visit.

**STEP 3: ISSUE THE INVITATION**

- Use the template in this toolkit to write an invitation letter for your member of Congress or a staff person.
- Find the website and district office phone numbers for your legislators using House.gov or Senate.gov. If your legislator has multiple offices, choose the one closest to where you plan to hold the visit.
- Call the office to ensure that your invitation is directed correctly. Ask for the district scheduler, and tell him or her that you would like to send an invitation and ask the best way to send it.
- Follow up on all invitations sent with additional phone calls/e-mails until the visit is scheduled.
Site Visit Setup Checklist & Tips Continued

**STEP FOUR: CONDUCT THE VISIT**

- Coordinate with internal staff the day before the visit.
- Prepare a one-page document telling your city’s story. Be sure to include basic facts about your city relevant to what you want to discuss.
- Review the talking points provided by NLC to prepare to discuss important city issues with your member of Congress.
- Review the plan to ensure that all time-frames are reasonable and to develop contingency plans in case of bad weather, transportation breakdowns, or other snafus.
- Make plans to record the visit. Have a photographer or internal staff take pictures, and assign someone to take notes, including key quotes or topics in which the member of Congress expressed the most interest.

**STEP FIVE: FOLLOW UP**

- Send a thank-you letter to the member of Congress’s office.
- Send pictures from the visit to the member of Congress’s office. And better yet, share the photos on social media sites.
- Follow up on any questions raised by providing additional information.
- Follow up on any potential media inquiries (after working with the member of Congress’s office).
- Consider asking the member of Congress to submit a statement about the visit for the Congressional Record.
- Report back to NLC about how the visit went.
- Maintain regular contact with the member of Congress and his or her staff.
## Sample Visit Agendas

### SAMPLE FACILITY TOUR PLAN
(1.5 HOUR VISIT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00am–10:15am</td>
<td>Greet member of Congress/staff at front office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am–10:45am</td>
<td>Tour one specific city-funded program or project that represents the local-federal partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45am–11:15am</td>
<td>Meet in conference room with employees for informal remarks and Q&amp;A (with snacks!).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15am–11:30am</td>
<td>Wrap up and get final questions and comments from member of Congress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SMALL BUSINESS/COALITION GROUP MEETING PLAN
(1.5 HOUR VISIT)

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PARTNER TOUR PLAN
(1.5 HOUR VISIT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00am–10:30am</td>
<td>Greet member of Congress/staff at front office. Provide briefing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am–11:15am</td>
<td>Load trucks/carts and drive to visit flagship projects or program providers. Coordinate with partners on the city message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15am–11:30am</td>
<td>Reconvene at office for refreshments and Q&amp;A with employees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Draft Invitation Letter

[Date]

The Honorable [Full Name of Representative Here]
[Street Address]
Washington, DC [ZIP code]

Dear [Representative/Senator Last Name]:

As a representative of city interests in your district, we invite you to visit [City, State]. Specifically, we hope that you might be available [the week of _____or a specific date] for a brief [description of visit, e.g., tour/meeting with employees]. By way of background, our city serves [information on number of citizens] in the community. [(if applicable) Our mission is to_____.]

We are eager to show you our work in [issue/service, e.g., community development, transportation planning, water preservations, bridging the digital divide] for our area. In particular, we would like to [fill in details of visit here, e.g., “show such-and-such project in our city” or “have you join us for an all-employee meeting at _____”].

As you know, the federal government is an important partner in our efforts to provide quality programs and services to our community. [Describe any specific benefits you’ve been able to provide with the assistance of federal funds.]

Upcoming debates in Congress on city funding and policy issues will have a dramatic impact on our city. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these potential impacts further—and provide needed background and resources for your office on these important issues.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. To set up a visit, or if you have any questions, please contact [name, email, and/or phone number].

Sincerely,

[Name]
[City title]